United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1590
25 February 1994

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General expresses outrage at shooting massacre by Israeli settler today at mosque in West Bank town of Hebron; Secretary-General calls for restraint by all parties so that autonomy talks can proceed between PLO and Israeli Government.

+ Security Council, in presidential statement on Liberia, welcomes agreement reached between Liberian parties and calls for adherence to timetable for transitional government; warns delays in implementing Cotonou Agreement endanger both its viability and support for UNOMIL.

+ President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Family Health and Planning Foundation of Turkey will share 1994 United Nations Population Award, for outstanding contributions to increasing awareness and solution of population problems.

+ Secretary-General decides to convene next round of peace talks between Government of Guatemala and opposition URNG from 3 to 7 March 1994 in Mexico; meeting to focus on human rights issues and timetable for considering remaining items of negotiation.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this morning expressed revulsion and outrage at the shooting-massacre earlier today by an Israeli settler at the al-Ibrahim Mosque in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), preliminary reports indicate that 50 worshippers died as a result of the attack and about 10 other Palestinians were killed in subsequent outbreaks of violence. Over 300 people were reported injured by midday.

A United Nations spokesman said the Secretary-General was deeply concerned by the unrest generated throughout the occupied territories in reaction to the incident, and about the impact that might have on negotations beteen the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government. He appealed for calm on the part of all concerned, so that the implementation

(more)

For information media—not an official record

of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Interim Self-Government Arrangements can proceed without delay. He also called on the Israeli authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that settlers refrain from such criminal acts.

The Commissioner-General of the UNRWA, Ilter Türkmen, also expressed his profound concern and shock over the massacre today. He said the UNRWA had immediately directed its ambulances to the Hebron area and had sent blood and other medical supplies to the hospitals there. The Agency had also helped redeploy medical staff to assist in dealing with the influx of casualties. UNRWA's emergency teams were operating in the Hebron area and other West Bank areas declared closed military zones.

* * *

The Security Council, in a statement on the situation in Liberia read out today by its President, Roble Olhaye (Djibouti), welcomed the agreement recently reached between the Liberian parties. It called upon the parties to uphold strictly the timetable they accepted for the commencement of disarmament and the installation of a transitional government on 7 March, and the holding of free and fair elections on 7 September. It also urged them to resolve quickly their differences on the disposition of the four remaining Cabinet posts.

Expressing its grave concern at delays in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the Council said that jeopardized both the viability of the Agreement and the ability of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to carry out its mandate. The Council also expressed concern about the recent upsurge in violence in Liberia and the related disruption of humanitarian relief shipments. It called on all Liberian parties to strictly adhere to the cease-fire agreement, and to cooperate with international relief efforts.

Noting the central role given to the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) in the disarmament process under the Cotonou Agreement, the Council underlined the importance of disarmament to the successful implementation of the Agreement. It stated that UNOMIL's ability to carry out its mandate depended on the capacity of ECOMOG to discharge its responsibilities.

* * *

President Monamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and the Family Health and Planning Foundation of Turkey will share the 1994 United Nations Population Award, in recognition of their contributions to the awareness and solution of population problems. The winners, announced yesterday, will receive a diploma, a gold medal and a monetary prize.

President Mubarak was honoured for his national and international leadership in population issues. He created the National Population Council when he became President of Egypt in 1981, and recently he established a

Ministry for Population and Family Affairs. During his two terms as President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), he stressed the need to stabilize population growth. Egypt has been a firm supporter of international population stabilization policies, and he and his Government will host the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo this September.

The Family Health and Planning Foundation of Turkey was chosen for its achievements in improving the quality of family-planning services. Founded in 1985 by a group of eminent industrialists and scientists, the Foundation's mandate is to address the country's population challenges by developing education and media campaigns, and training courses for government and business leaders. It has also developed its own contraceptive distribution service, linking its family-planning activities to a broader range of services including maternal and child health care and nutrition.

* * *

Following consultations with the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), the Secretary-General has decided to convene the next round of the Guatemalan peace talks from 3 to 7 March 1994. According to a United Nations spokesman, the Government of Mexico has offered to host the meeting. As agreed by the parties on 10 January, that meeting will focus on reaching an agreement on human rights issues and on a timetable for the consideration of all outstanding items on the agenda for the negotiations.

In the Framework Agreement of 10 January, the parties asked the Secretary-General to select a moderator for their peace talks. He appointed Jean Arnault, who had been participating in the negotiations as the United Nations observer since June 1992.

* *** *